

AMERICAN PATHWAYS 2000

Background



*What is the **American Pathways 2000** Program?*

The **American Pathways 2000** program is a public-private partnership that recognizes cultural/heritage tour itineraries by designating them **American Pathways 2000** itineraries. This program offers genuine opportunities for the U.S. travel industry to showcase, through public-private partnerships, our country's extraordinary heritage to a worldwide audience.

As part of the White House Millennium Program, **American Pathways 2000** shares with the world "American Culturalism": A celebration of the richly diverse heritage that is inherent in the American Experience. The project is co-sponsored by the Office of Tourism Industries in the U.S. Department of Commerce, the National Tour Association (NTA) and the International Association of Convention and Visitor Bureaus (IACVB), as founding partners, along with the United States Tour Operators Association (USTOA), the American Bus Association (ABA), and the Receptive Services Association (RSA). Formal designation as an **American Pathways 2000** itinerary, under the auspices of the White House Millennium Program, confers high honor not only on that itinerary, but also on the communities and heritage/cultural organizations featured in these tours.

*What are the goals of **American Pathways 2000**?*

The goals of the **American Pathways 2000** program are to encourage the development and sales of American cultural/heritage tourism products and to assist in their export. These efforts will support the national effort to "ensure an American travel experience that is second to none" as set forth at the White House Conference on Travel and Tourism.

How is the program linked to the First Lady's White House Millennium Program?

Led by the First Lady, the White House Millennium Program is a multi-year initiative to mark the end of the 20th century and the beginning of the new millennium. It celebrates the American experience by recognizing and initiating projects that engage every sector of society in conveying our rich heritage to future generations. The White House Millennium Program highlights projects that recognize the creativity and inventiveness of the American people.

American Pathways 2000 is the lead tourism activity in the "Millennium Trails" project, a

segment of the White House Millennium Program. ***American Pathways 2000*** affords U.S. tourism industries an opportunity to develop and introduce American cultural/heritage products that provide both domestic and international travelers the opportunity to uncover the rich and diverse treasures of the American experience.

Who was eligible to apply?

Any company or other legal entity, actively engaged in operating, conducting or arranging packaged travel in the United States, was eligible to submit an itinerary for consideration.

Applicants were asked to provide proof of membership in good standing with the National Tour Association (NTA), United States Tour Operators Association (USTOA), American Bus Association (ABA), the Receptive Services Association (RSA), or the International Travel Services Association (ITSA) or to certify that it complied with applicable laws and other requirements.

What qualified an itinerary for designation?

Itineraries needed to interpret at least one of the four official ***American Pathways 2000*** themes: *From Sea to Shining Sea*, *I Have a Dream*, *Lady Liberty*, and *America's Cultural Heritage*. Applicants had to show how the sites and attractions in the tour would be interpreted for domestic and/or international tour participants. Itineraries had to be endorsed by a Destination Marketing Organization (e.g., a convention and visitors bureau or state tourism office). And finally, the applicant business had to submit a comprehensive marketing plan for the itinerary.

What types of experiences do the itineraries highlight?

A majority of all sites included in designated itineraries incorporate experiences that pertain to at least one of the following themes.

« *From Sea to Shining Sea*: The indigenous peoples of the Americas

From tiny coastal settlements a nation grew to encompass most of a continent and far-flung islands. The story of its original inhabitants, the indigenous peoples of the Americas, is an important one in the American experience. Designated itineraries incorporating this theme provide experiences which highlight how America's territorial expansion affected the indigenous peoples of the Americas and/or how the culture(s) of these people have influenced American life.

« *I Have a Dream*: From slavery to civil rights...America's striving for a true democracy

The concept that all men are created equal is a cornerstone of the American

psyche. It is part of the glue that binds us as Americans. Unfortunately, our belief in this ideal has not always been borne out in practice, particularly as it relates to the African-American experience. And yet African-Americans have made untold contributions to the building of this nation throughout its entire 223 year history. In fact, the African-American quest for freedom and equality may be the most emblematic story of America's struggle to reach a true democracy. Designated itineraries incorporating this theme provide experiences that highlight the African-American story.

« *Lady Liberty: Immigration and the building of America*

Since its beginnings, America has been a nation of immigrants...with each wave of inhabitants to our shores renewing American society, making it culturally diverse and commercially vital. Designated itineraries incorporating this theme provide experiences that highlight the story of American immigrants.

« *America's Cultural Mosaic: Ethnic influences in American "Pop Culture"*

Ethnic diversity has enriched American music, literature, art and the whole fabric of society. Because this blending of the American mosaic has been so successful, American popular culture has been, in the second half of the twentieth century, the nation's most significant export. Our movies, television programming, best selling books and, most of all, our music dominate global markets. American popular culture reflects the diversity of the American people by incorporating elements of many cultures...just think of the influence of African-American music on the rock-and-roll sound made famous by Elvis Presley. Designated itineraries incorporating this theme provide experiences that highlight ethnic influences in American "Pop Culture."

How did the designation process work?

American Pathways 2000 Challenge Kits, explaining the program and application process, were sent to NTA, ABA, USTOA, and RSA members and other qualified applicants. Once the applications were received in mid-April, they were reviewed by a panel of representatives of Federal agencies with knowledge of and experience in tourism, culture, and heritage projects. Member agencies were the Smithsonian Institute, the National Endowment for the Arts, and the National Park Service of the U.S. Department of the Interior. The Review Panel made recommendations for designations and final designation was made by the Office of Tourism Industries in the U.S. Department of Commerce.

What happens now that an itinerary has been designated?

Designated itineraries have the option of being featured on the official **American Pathways 2000** web site, which was launched on July 6 by the partners and Alamo Rent-A-Car, the official web page sponsor. The address of the web site is

<http://www.americanpathways.com>.

American Pathways 2000 partners are providing information about the program and the designated itineraries to national newspapers, major regional newspapers, ethnic print press, international print press and domestic travel trade press.

A series of cross promotional activities are being co-ordinated to run through May 2000, to highlight **American Pathways 2000** itineraries to both domestic and international audiences via print, television, trade show, and special event opportunities.

*What was the response to the **American Pathways 2000** national challenge?*

The partners received 127 applications from 46 states, the District of Columbia, and other territories. Of those applications, 74 itineraries met the criteria and were designated. These itineraries include sites, events, and activities in 42 states and the District of Columbia.

The 74 designated itineraries are operated by 43 tour and tour bus operators. Forty of those operators are small- or medium-sized businesses.

The states with the most designated itineraries are Minnesota with 10, New York with 9, Tennessee and South Dakota with 8 each, and Montana, Alabama, and Illinois with 7 each. The designated itineraries are spread geographically from Florida to Alaska. Not only do they show the diversity of cultures and heritages in the United States, but also the diversity of the available U.S. tourism product and services. Some itineraries last for several hours, while others offer an experience stretching over several weeks.